

Cunningham Cabin  
Moose  
Grand Teton National Park  
Wyoming

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
450 Golden Gate Avenue  
San Francisco, California

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CUNNINGHAM CABIN

Grand Teton National Park, Moose, Wyoming

ADDRESS: Located between the Snake River and U. S. 89,  
north of Moose, Wyo., in Grand Teton National Park

OWNER: National Park Service

OCCUPANT: none

USE: Historic Point of Interest

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This two room log structure is all that remains today of the J.P. Cunningham Ranch, one of the early homesteads in the Jackson Hole area. The other buildings, including an Indian fort built by the local inhabitants have since been torn down.

In 1893 horse thieves were surprised as they emerged from one of the buildings that stood on the Cunningham ranch and were shot down. Some say that it was this very cabin; others believe it was the barn.

The sod-roofed two room cabin was restored to its present condition in 1956. It is probably the oldest structure still standing in the area, an example of the "dog-run" log cabin plan.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

James Pierce Cunningham was one of the early settlers in the Jackson Hole Valley. He arrived in 1888, coming from Rockport, New York, by way of Michigan where he worked in the logging business. He and a partner established a homestead on Spencer Creek and they engaged in trapping that first winter.

The following year (1889) they gave up their homestead claim. Cunningham then filed a claim on land on the east bank of the Snake River. Here he built the present cabin and a barn and other out buildings. This low two-room cabin with the rooms separated by a breezeway was probably built that year. In 1895, Mr. and Mrs.

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Cunningham lived in the south room and workmen building them a new and more elaborate home occupied the room on the north. Afterwards the north room became a blacksmith shop.

There are several noteworthy events concerning the Cunningham Ranch. In 1893 horse thieves were ambushed on the ranch by a posse from Jackson. They were shot down as they emerged from one of the buildings on the ranch. Doubt remains as to whether it was this cabin, the barn, or another nearby structure.

During the Indian troubles of 1895, Cunningham, assisted by trappers and miners erected three log fort-like structures around his new home. These were torn down at a later date by Cunningham sometime after 1914 when he repurchased the land he had sold in 1909 to John "Pete" Nelson.

Records show that Cunningham received patent to 160 acres on September 5, 1906. The five-year residence period would have been established on the land in 1901; no doubt the acreage then was greatly increased over the original homestead claim. In 1909 he sold or traded 200 acres of his land to John "Pete" Nelson. It is believed that these 200 acres included the original homestead and ranch structures. The Cunninghams then operated the Victor Hotel, Victor, Idaho. In 1914 Cunningham bought back the 200 acres and the title was conveyed to Margaret Cunningham, his wife.

Pierce Cunningham was one of the early settlers who engaged in the cattle business. The tax assessment records of Teton County in 1924 show that the J. P. Cunningham Ranch included 560 acres consisting of 200 acres of irrigated cultivated land, 125 acres of natural meadow and 235 acres of grazing land. In addition, the records state that he was assessed for 3 purebred bulls, 60 stock calves coming yearlings, and 80 stock calves two years and older.

By 1926 Pierce had switched from cattle to sheep in an effort to beat the harsh economics of the cattle industry. The Cunninghams sold their holdings in 1928. Pierce Cunningham died April 17, 1934, in Idaho Falls, Idaho, closing a chapter on one of Jackson's early settlers, a trapper, rancher and Justice of the Peace.

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL AND SOURCES

- Apple, Russell A., An Interpretive Prospectus for Post-Fur Trade History, Grand Teton National Park, Midwest Region, National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1960, amendments 1963.
- Bonney, Orrin H. and Lorraine G., Jackson Hole and Grand Teton National Park, published by author, Houston, 1961.
- Kendrew, A. E., "Report on Owned Structures of a Historic Character, Jackson Hole, Wyoming", 1942.
- Mumey, Nolie, The Teton Mountains, Their History and Tradition, Artcraft Press, Denver, 1947.

## ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The sod-roofed log cabin was built entirely without the use of nails or milled lumber. Wood chinking was held in place by wooden wedges driven into the adjacent logs. The door joints are hand-hewn and held in place by wooden dowels. The structure was restored in 1956.

## EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions - 41'-5" x 15'-3"; two rooms separated by an open breezeway under a single roof.

Foundation - Stone.

Openings - Entrances: each of the two rooms has a single doorway opening onto the breezeway and opposite each other. The door to the south room is 2'-10" x 5'-4" and the door to the north room is 2'-5" x 5'-5".

Windows: each room has two, one each on the northeast and the southwest. The openings vary in width from 2'-3" to 4'-5". No window frames are evident. Jamb, head and sills are handhewn. Windows, probably without glass, were protected by shutters.

Roof - Logs of 8 to 10 inches in diameter run the length of the building -- two at the ridge and one each between the ridge and the exterior walls. These are crossed at a 90° angle by smaller logs varying in size from 3" to 4½" in diameter which are in turn covered by sod. The simple gable roof has a pitch of approximately 15½°.

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Chimney - None.

#### INTERIOR

Floor Plan - Two rooms approximately square and of the same size with a single doorway for each opening onto a breezeway. The south room has an interior dimension of 14'-1" x 13'-10" and the north room measures 14'-1" x 13'-9". The southern room was living quarters, the north room a blacksmith shop. A work bench, forge and anvil remain today.

Floor - Earth.

Wall and Ceiling Finish - Exposed logs and chinking.

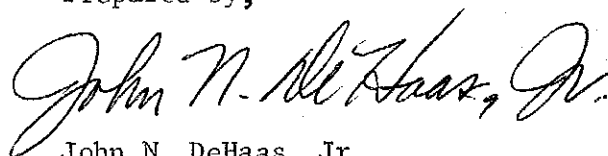
Doors - None remain.

Trim - Door bucks are hand-hewn planks 2" x 6½" anchored to the log ends by 1" round pegs.

#### GENERAL SETTING

The cabin is located on the original Cunningham homestead on the east bank of the Snake River, north of the towns of Moose and Jackson. The site is between the present Highway 89 and the Snake River. None of the other ranch buildings remain today.

Prepared by,



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June 1967

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